

The Misuse and Abuse of Words: Reflecting on Misology with Plato and Josef Pieper

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Introduction: The Corruption of Words

Concerning the apparent abuse of the word “eternity,” Romano Guardini observes: “A word is not merely a sign to convey a meaning. It is a living thing, embodying spirit. In company with other words it makes up language, and language is the room in which man lives.”[1] If humans live in language, then it matters very much how we use it; we ought to be careful about how we speak and write. Guardini adds: “When a word decays, it is not merely that we become uncertain of each other’s meaning. One of the forms that compose our life has perished. A signpost has become illegible. A light has been extinguished and our intellectual day made darker.”[2] If the corruption of a word impoverishes our intellectual lives by obscuring the portion of reality to which the word refers, the corruption of language more broadly would have a devastating effect on human life by darkening reality as such. The misuse of words not only confuses speech and compromises communication; it obstructs access to truth.

Philosophy has much to say, of course, about language. I am not, however, concerned herein with the philosophy of language. Instead, my concern is moral and political: how are words related to human life, and what are the consequences, for persons, of the misuse of language? Although these questions are perennial, and are almost certainly particularly salient today, my approach is ostensibly historical, treating Plato and one of his twentieth century readers, the German Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper. What can we learn from them about the misuse of words?

Plato and the Sophists

Let me begin with a general dimension of Plato's writing, what we might call his animosity towards and distrust of the sophists. Anyone who has read even a little bit of Plato recognizes he had something against the sophists, those eloquent, and often highly paid, itinerant teachers of rhetoric who were famous, particularly in Athens and particularly with young aristocrats, during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. What made them so famous was their professed ability to win any argument, as well as their presumption to be able to teach young people to do the same. The sophists claimed such great mastery of language and of rhetorical structure that their students could learn to persuade anyone of anything, whether in public debate or in private conversation. Indeed, sophistical skill was so putatively powerful that its practitioners would be able to persuade others, not only whether or not their positions were true, but, most impressively, when their positions were false.

For example, Gorgias, a sophist so successful and arrogant that he commissioned a golden statue of himself[3], wrote a speech in defense of Helen of Troy to refute "those who rebuke (her)".[4] The speech was evidently meant to show that his rhetorical style was so effective that even Helen, who had long been "rebuked" for causing the long and bloody Trojan war, could be exonerated. If Helen could be made to seem blameless, then ambitious young men looking to get ahead in business or politics could acquire an immeasurably valuable skill by associating with Gorgias, and with other sophists.

These allegedly skilled teachers and practitioners of clever speech figure prominently in Plato's writing, making appearances in many dialogues, though not always with the same seriousness.

In dialogues like the *Hippias Major* and the *Euthydemus*[5], the sophists are presented rather comically, maybe ungenerously. In these cases, the sophists do not appear as serious intellectual adversaries, being easily refuted by Socrates' philosophical rhetoric, and made to look rather silly in the process. Although he is not presented as an explicitly comic figure, much the same is true of Thrasymachus in Book 1 of the *Republic*[6], where this lesser sophist is defeated, due to embarrassment, when he realizes that his espoused position implies his own stupidity (350c). His definition that justice is the advantage of the stronger is shown to be self-contradictory (341c-342e), as is his refinement that injustice is superior to justice (345c-350c). It is only, however, when his arguments leads him to admit that justice is more like knowledge and injustice more like ignorance that he shrinks from the debate, not

because he has exhausted his arguments – though he may very well have – but because he is ashamed to have been praising injustice and himself as a teacher of it only to also state aloud that unjust people are stupid. To his credit, Thrasymachus, who blushes (350d), appears to be capable of shame, and thus of recognizing his own folly and vice, whether he corrects himself subsequently or not. As Aristotle tells us, shame is not a virtue, since we should not do the things of which we are ashamed in the first place, but shame may be, nonetheless, a sign that one could eventually cultivate virtue, like children who “err in many ways, but are held back by shame.”[7] Thrasymachus is childish – petulant and irascible; he is not, however, wholly wicked.

In the *Gorgias*[8] and *Protagoras*[9], by contrast, the sophists are treated much more seriously, no doubt because the two titular characters were also the two most famous and successful sophists during Socrates’ life. Despite being presented more seriously, they are nonetheless refuted, and their profession is disparaged in the end. Indeed, when pressed, in the *Gorgias*, to say what sort of expertise (*techne*) rhetoric and sophistry are, Socrates not only denies they are forms of knowledge; he calls them knacks (*empeiria*), the sort of know-how one develops through repetition, but without skill or understanding. Like pastry-baking and cosmetics, sophistry and rhetoric have no relation to genuine knowledge, truth, goodness, beauty, or health; rather, they merely tend to produce “a certain gratification and pleasure” (462c). Sophistry, however dire its effects are, actually lacks seriousness: it is pastry-baking of the soul, feeding our appetites, but providing no genuine nourishment. Sophistry pleases, but can also make us terribly sick.

The *Sophist*[10], which does not involve a confrontation between Socrates and a sophist at all, provides a different kind of example. Socrates barely speaks in this dialogue. Instead, an unnamed visitor from Elea, the home town of Parmenides and Zeno, engages in a philosophical discussion with a young math student, Theaetetus, who spent the previous day with Socrates discussing knowledge.[11] In the *Sophist*, the visitor and Theaetetus try to define sophistry in order to prove that the sophist is different than the philosopher, both of whom are also different from the statesman. In so doing, the visitor runs through several possible definitions, some amusing, like sophists, resembling anglers, are hunters of wealthy young men (223b), others frightening, like sophists make up a false reality through speeches, and convince ignorant people to believe in that false reality (268b). Indeed, the sophist is a kind of enchanter, a liar whose words put listeners, particularly the young, under a spell that makes “it seem that [the words] are spoken truly and hence that the speaker is the wisest of all in all things” (234c). All the definitions, whether amusing or deadly serious, lead Theaetetus, and the attentive reader, to a deep wariness about sophists.

The question is: why? What does Plato have against these sophists? Why does he keep coming back to them, sometimes ungenerously, sometimes more seriously, but always to undermine and refute them? What is wrong with sophistry? And, since the issue does not merely concern the history of philosophy, what should anyone have against sophists?

Plato and Misology

I want to approach these questions indirectly, as it were. Rather than examining Plato's presentation of the sophists in more detail, I turn to a dialogue that is ostensibly unrelated to sophistry, but one where the underlying problem of sophistry is announced, albeit subtly: the *Phaedo*. Here, Plato does not refute or mock any specific sophists, though he does mock some of Socrates' young friends, who might have some sophistical sympathies. Instead, he implicitly warns against sophistry by identifying a greatest evil, which happens to be exemplified in sophistry: misology, the hatred of words.

The *Phaedo* dramatizes the day of Socrates' execution. As is generally well known, Socrates was convicted of impiety and corrupting the youth in 399 BC. Refusing to propose a punishment that his prosecutors could accept – indeed, Plato's *Apology*[12] presents a Socrates arrogant enough to propose public honor as his due punishment – he was sentenced to death. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates' friends arrive on the day that this sentence is to be carried out. They come to say goodbye, to philosophize with him one last time, and, possibly, to try to convince him to escape from prison. In another of Plato's dialogues, the *Crito*[13], which takes place two days prior to the execution, Socrates' old and loyal friend, Crito, a pragmatic businessman, visits Socrates in prison to try to convince him to escape. Crito and others, including two Theban friends, Simmias and Cebes, have pooled enough money to bribe all the requisite people, and Crito has friends in Thessaly who will gladly take care of Socrates after he flees Athens. Socrates refuses Crito's offer because, to oversimplify in summary, two wrongs don't make a right: since it is never right to do wrong, and escaping from prison would be wrong, to say nothing of bribing public officials, Socrates will not do it, no matter how unjust his conviction might have been.

Socrates' friends arrive on the day of the execution to visit with Socrates, who is, despite their efforts to persuade him to the contrary, prepared to die – almost gladly. The main topic of their discussion is the soul, and its immortality. Socrates thinks the soul is undying and that, having lived as virtuously as he could, his undying soul will be received favorably by the gods in the afterlife (63b-c). His friends, specifically the two Thebans noted above, Simmias and Cebes, are doubtful. They worry that the soul simply dissipates upon death, like a cloud of smoke; that is to say, although they ostensibly believe the soul is an immaterial thing, they nonetheless fear that it is actually material, like the body, and will, like the body, decay and cease to exist, if not at death, when the body and soul will be separated, at least a short time thereafter (70a). They fear death and are annoyed at Socrates for not fearing it, too. Not only is Socrates not afraid, he almost cheerfully awaits his end, believing that his soul, once separated from his body, will persist and be received well by the gods. Socrates has hope, which condition seems to offend his despairing and fearful friends.

Simmias and Cebes see no good reason for hope. Despite having heard things said about the soul's immortality, both by Socrates and by the great Pythagorean, Philolaus (61d-e), with whom they have studied, they do not understand how the soul could persist indefinitely beyond the natural life of the human being. If there are insufficient grounds to believe that the soul is undying, then it is unjustified to believe that the gods will receive the soul well, and

if the latter belief is unjustified, then Socrates is being mindless for facing death without concern (62d-e; see also 88b). They are more than afraid of death and sad that their friend is about to die; they are angry with him for not accepting their help in escaping. He is leaving them for the sake of what they take to be a foolish hope. Accordingly, Socrates must convince his friends that he is right to not fear death, that the soul is immortal, and that the soul of a decent person, like a genuine philosopher, is likely to be judged favorably in an afterlife. In short, he must convince them to have hope.

Socrates makes several arguments – none terribly convincing, to be frank – for the soul's immortality, but his friends remain skeptical. On a normal day, not accepting Socrates' arguments might not cause much turmoil, but on this day, when Socrates is about to die, and his soul is about to do God knows what, his inability to persuade them causes them to despair (88c-89a). If he cannot convince them to have hope, the dialogue implies, he either should escape or he is mindless, which is to say, he is utterly unphilosophical, despite having spent a whole adult life practicing philosophy – and doing so at the highest level, no less. If the great Socrates faces death mindlessly, then what chance do the rest have? In effect, his friends despair that philosophy might not be worth all the trouble, including possible execution. The stakes are very high for philosophy: if philosophy ends up in mindlessness, then it is not worth anyone's attention, especially that of the talented and ambitious young people who might also be attracted to philosophy's alternative, namely sophistry, with its promise of political and economic success.

Not surprisingly, Socrates will convince them in the end, but not before he also warns his friends about the evil that their despairing could cause – indeed, he calls it the greatest evil.

Socrates warns them: “let's be on our guard ... so that we don't become ... haters of argument, as some become haters of human beings; for it's not possible ... for anybody to experience a greater evil than hating arguments” (89c-d). There is no greater evil, no worse calamity, than misology, the hatred of *logos*, which means not only the hatred of arguments, but also the hatred of reason and of words. What's more, the hatred of words is greater than but somehow related to the hatred of human beings; misology is like misanthropy, but somehow more dangerous. Presumably, Socrates thinks his friends understand that misanthropy is an obvious and grave evil; thus, the comparison is meant to stress the profound danger of misology.

As it turns out, this is the second time in the dialogue that Socrates refers to a greatest evil. After defending philosophy as a sort of temporary death, a quasi-separation of soul from body by which the soul apprehends some degree of truth by limiting its reliance on the body, Socrates warns against loving the body and its pleasures excessively. Indeed, the person who is “violently pleased or terrified or pained or desirous” (83b) suffers “the greatest and most extreme evil of all” (83c), namely that the “soul is compelled, at the very moment she's violently pleased or pained at something, to regard what above all brought her to suffering as

both the most manifest and most true – although this isn't the case. And these are above all the visible things" (83c). The greatest evil is confusing the visible things with the knowable things, the particular objects of experience with ideas, concepts, or universal truths.

We have here three great evils, two of which are called greatest: trusting sense as a source of knowledge; distrusting humans; and distrusting arguments and words. Let us consider each briefly.

First, what is wrong with trusting the senses? Nothing, so long as we trust our senses as the means by which we experience particular objects, rather than trusting that what we experience, what we feel, is universally true. Knowledge is always of something universal, never of a particular thing. If I know a particular thing, I know it as an instance of a kind; it is not itself the kind. Humans understand this, even if only intuitively. The table I see is not table itself. It is a table. Moreover, I can tell it is a table because I have some, however imprecise, sense of what table means; I understand its definition, more or less. If I make the mistake of trusting that this table here is table itself, then most tables would cease to be tables. If this table happens to be unique in appearance, then there would quite literally be only one table. The upshot is what we might today call a version of subjectivism: either there is no truth because everything is merely dependent on my subjective perspective or else everything I sense or feel is true – of course, these amount to the same thing as both do away with any reliably objective standard of truth and falsity. Subjectivism and its sibling, relativism, are the perennial scourges of all learning. This position bars one from any semblance of a stable reality that undergirds experience; in so doing it precludes genuine study, including philosophy. Trusting the senses is also distrusting intellect. Without intellect, there can be no knowledge.

Second, what is wrong with distrusting humans? Again, nothing, if by this we mean that some particular humans are not trustworthy; but if we mean to deny that humans are trustworthy in principle, then we fall into the problem of distrusting or even denying the intersubjective framework of human life. Of course, if I distrust all humans, I also distrust myself; even I am not stable enough to rely on. This experience is sadly common: a trusted person violates that trust, a second does the same, then a third and a fourth, and one ends up cynically concluding that all people are worthless and untrustworthy. Familiar though this experience may be, most people, as Socrates points out (89d-90b), are neither entirely untrustworthy and bad nor perfectly trustworthy and good. Humans are mostly in between, neither worthy of complete trust nor unworthy of any trust at all. The person who comes to hate humans out of a lack of trust makes an error not unlike the error of trusting feeling: that person generalizes, from the particular experience of a few bad people, that all people, in their very being, are irremediably bad and untrustworthy. This person comes to hate humans, becomes a misanthrope, because they have misunderstood human nature; in so doing, they reject the notion of a stable human nature altogether.

Third, what is wrong with distrusting words? Once again, we must admit that there is nothing wrong with it, if we mean recognizing that words can be false, that our words can get it wrong, or, even, that words can be used to deceive. Language is, of course, imperfect, as are its users. But if by distrusting words we mean denying their ability to communicate reliably at all, then this distrust is unfounded and devastating. As Socrates describes it, one can come to distrust words by trusting them initially only to conclude from their imperfection that they are worthless. Such a person does not only come to distrust words; their hatred is manifest in an abuse of them: “those especially who’ve spent their days in debate-arguments end up thinking they’ve become the wisest of men and they alone have detected that there’s nothing sound or stable – not in the realm of either practical matters *or* arguments – but all the things that *are* simply toss to and fro, as happens in the Euripus, and don’t stay put anywhere for any length of time” (90c). Hatred of words is the greatest evil because it combines the evils of subjectivism and misanthropy: it rejects a reliable standard of truth and rejects the integrity of others; it manipulates words in order to overpower others and aggrandize oneself.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates not only encourages his friends to keep reasoning, in this case to keep reasoning about the soul, despite the failure of past arguments; he reminds them that, however bad some arguments might be, however poorly or falsely we may speak about the world, we can reason about it meaningfully. We abandon trust in argument and language at our own peril. Without trust in and love of words, a genuine philology, we also abandon any notion of a stable reality about which we can be right or wrong, a reality that includes the others with whom we may communicate, with whom we may investigate philosophical questions.

Pieper and the Abuse of Words

Let me return to the question: what is Plato’s problem with the sophists? Pieper states it simply and pointedly in *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*: “corruption of the word – you are corrupting the language!”[14] Sophists are misologists and misologists are sophistical. Plato distrusts sophists, as well as their students and admirers, because they are haters of words. As such, they commit and propagate the greatest evil: a denial of stable reality and of the human capacity to know that reality. If this is so, sophistry is genuinely dangerous for individuals and societies; it is not just an annoyance to old-fashioned philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Pieper. Sophistry is not an abstraction genuine philosophers dislike; it is a moral and political threat. If Plato and Pieper are right, we should all be on guard against it.

Why does corruption of the word matter? Because language is not just an object we can know and use; it is the medium through which humans know and live, and through which they flourish or not. We can study language, using, of course, language to do so, but, more importantly, we engage with the world, including the others in it, through words: “And so, if the word becomes corrupted, human existence itself will not remain unaffected and untainted.”[15] This is the point that Guardini, with whom Pieper studied briefly[16], makes in

the passage quoted above: human life cannot be untainted by the corruption of a word because, to repeat, “one of the forms that compose our life has perished.” Our access to things in the real world is obscured.

In Pieper’s view, language serves two purposes: first, it expresses reality; second, it communicates. Through words, we express the way things are to someone else; words communicate what a speaker takes to be the case to another person, someone who understands the words – at least some non-trivial number of them – and could use them in the same way, too. The two dimensions are clearly connected: “The one does not exist without the other. At first we may well presume that such and such is simply a factual reality and, of course, describe it. Right: describe it – but to whom? The other person is already in the picture; what happens here is already communication. In the very attempt to know reality, there already is present the aim of communication.”[17] There may be other ways to express reality and to communicate – through art, for instance – but language is a privileged way.

Of course, language is not perfect. Words do not correspond to reality exactly, as if there were one perfectly-suited and immutable word for each existing thing. The meaning of words is not unwaveringly stable. This is all undeniable. But, imperfect as it is, we use language to understand and represent reality, more or less, successfully. We can, indeed, understand the world and talk about it meaningfully. Certainly, lying is possible – and relatively common. I can use words to willfully misrepresent the way things are, but doing so presupposes that the two purposes of language obtain. Lying makes an exception of itself; it only works, when it works, because words are supposed to communicate reality. We can falsify reality and express that falsification to someone, but only because language in its essence does the opposite. Certainly, error is also possible. I might express what I take to be the case, and I might be mistaken. That is still entirely consistent with the nature of language, not mainly because my intention was sincere, but because error is corrigible, and it is corrigible precisely because language aims at expressing, to someone, something truthful about the way things are. If sophists corrupt language, they corrupt both dimensions of language: they undermine its relation to reality and they undermine communication.

This corruption follows from sophistry’s disregard or denial of truth, including their denial of the truthfulness of language. All sophists are, in effect, nihilistic, though no one was more explicitly so than Gorgias. There are few extant writings of Gorgias, but this basic thesis survives: nothing is; if it was, we could not know it; if we could know it, we could not communicate it.[18] Words and things, if the latter even exist, are utterly separate, and the gap between them is unbridgeable. Both corruptions are contained in this single thesis. To disregard language’s fundamental purpose precludes concern for truth because it denies a basic structure to being; and in so doing, it denies the power of words to express being. In abandoning reality and truth, sophists also cannot communicate in a genuine way. The interlocutor is part of reality; if reality is disregarded or denied, then so is the other person. For sophistry, there is no truth and no other person. Misology implies misanthropy.

If the sophists denied the purpose of words and kept quiet, as someone who distrusts words probably should, they might not be worrisome, but they also speak much, and, what is worse, very well, artfully, albeit without knowledge. That is why sophists can be so persuasive; they are clever speakers, however much they abandon the purpose of speech. Here is the problem: “the possibility that something could well be superbly crafted – that it could be perfectly worded; brilliantly formulated; strikingly written, performed, staged, or put on screen – and at the same time, in its entire thrust and essence, be false; and not only false, but outright bad, inferior, contemptible, shameful, destructive, wretched – and still marvelously put together.”[19] The danger of sophistry is that it is so wonderfully attractive; we might even, as Plato suggests in the *Sophist*, consider it enchanting. Recalling, also, that Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, notes that the hatred of words turns into a manipulation of them (90c), it is likely that all misologists become clever speakers, or at least aspire to become so. Not all misologists will be trained sophists, but they will all play at something sophistical.

If sophistry is false, and thus neither represents reality nor communicates, what does it do? As Socrates puts it in the *Gorgias*, it gratifies and pleases. It flatters – and the more well-put it is, the more flattering it will be. What does flattery mean? Pieper describes it thusly:

Flattery here does not mean saying what the other likes to hear, telling him something nice, something to tickle his vanity. And what is thus said is not necessarily a lie, either. For example, I might meet a colleague and say to him, “I have read your recent article, and I am fascinated!” It could well be that I have not read the article at all and am therefore anything but fascinated. This does not yet amount to flattery! Or else I might indeed have read the article, and I am really fascinated, and what I said was flattery nevertheless. ... What makes the difference? The decisive element is the ulterior motive. I address the other not simply to please him or to tell him something true. Rather, what I say to him is designed to get something from him! ... The other, whom I try to influence with what he likes to hear, ceases to be my partner; he is no longer a fellow subject. Rather, he has become for me an object to be manipulated, possibly to be dominated, to be handled and controlled.[20]

Flattery is not about stroking someone’s ego, though it may do that, too, as a means to its actual end. It is about manipulating the other, using language to get one’s own way. Language is indeed powerful; it has the power to reveal something about the real world and to enter communion with another. To abuse language is thus to abuse its power; it is to convert this power into control, mastery, or tyranny over others. Sophistry manipulates the meaning of words, whereby severing the bond between them and the real world, and it does so in order to control rather than communicate.

When flattery becomes widespread, when it succeeds so often that ever more people take it up, sophistry becomes a major political and social problem: “[The] danger of corruption increases as the promise of possible success becomes more tempting. Not just a specific sector is then endangered, such as the press, or television, or radio; no, the commonweal of all people is then threatened, since by necessity it functions through the medium of the word. Then we are faced, in short, with the threat that communication as such decays, that

public discourse becomes detached from the notions of truth and reality.”[21] A world where words are regularly abused is a world where reality cannot be accessed readily, and where genuine communion is rare; it is a world infected by the greatest evils Socrates described.

The power of flattery is a corrupted and upside-down power, a tyrannical control, a “sham authority”. [22] A social and political world dominated by flattery will, thus, always be prone to sham authority and tyranny, to the organized and deliberate control of the word. We call this propaganda. [23] It should not surprise anyone that the father of public relations, and an early expert in marketing for both business and politics, Edward Bernays, defended what I am calling sophistry in a 1928 book. It is entitled, simply and fittingly, *Propaganda*. [24]

Bernays does not hide the fact that propaganda is manipulative; indeed, he praises it as politically necessary, even salutary: “the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.” [25] The manipulators, the greatest sophists, are the ones with the real power – a power premised on misleadingly abusing language to serve their interests.

It gets worse yet. Not only does the abuse of language lead to an abuse of power, but this abuse of power can, shall I say, turn the world upside-down. The more propaganda we consume, the more we are exposed to misology, and the more we are enchanted by sophists, the more our world begins to look like the flattering nonsense we have been fed. Our reality becomes a pseudo-reality. Even if we use language correctly, our fundamental ignorance means we are communicating earnestly about something that does not actually exist, at least not in the way we presume it does. If we look out into a pseudo-reality, however honestly we might do so, we are barred from accessing truth: “For the general public is being reduced to a state where people not only are unable to find out about the truth but also become unable even to *search* for the truth because they are satisfied with deception and trickery that have determined their convictions, satisfied with fictitious reality created by design through the abuse of language.” [26]

Concluding: What is to be Done?

Flattery and propaganda are as prevalent today as they were in Pieper’s day, more or less. They are, undoubtedly, much more common than they were in Plato’s. There can be little doubt that words are abused, even hated. If this is so, then the situation is dire, but not hopeless. There are, in the views of Plato and Pieper, remedies, one of which is genuine philosophy, a sincere love of wisdom utterly unencumbered by the demands of commercial and political expedience. This seems to be the underlying point of so much of Plato’s writing: we must trust *logos*, and trust the reasoned pursuit of truth we call philosophy. Philosophy does not secure wisdom, but it is the ongoing and unending pursuit of it. It can only proceed by trusting argument, language, and words – in short, philologically.

To combat sophistry – whether in ancient Greece, post-war Europe, or the twenty-first century West – humans need what Plato built for himself and his friends: a genuine academy, a protected space where truth can be pursued, where wisdom can be loved, and where the sophistical impulse is kept at bay. We need the University, what Pieper describes as “an area of truth, a sheltered space for the autonomous study of reality, where it is possible, without restrictions, to examine, investigate, discuss, and express what is true about any thing – a space, then, explicitly protected against all potential special interests and invading influences, where hidden agendas have no place, be they collective or private, political, economic, or ideological.”[27] This and only this is what academic freedom means. The freedom to flatter, to manipulate and control through words, should not be a protected freedom. We need today good and free Universities, where the liberal arts are taught, not the pseudo-liberal arts – those that pretend to be liberal, but really just serve some utility, some political, economic, or ideological function – that aim to make young people better sophists: ““Academic” is to mean “antisophistic” if it is to mean anything at all.”[28]

Whether such Universities exist or not on a wide enough scale to make a significant difference is certainly up for debate. I believe there are some, but not as many as there are institutions usurping the name. In contrast, it is much less disputable that without free spaces, like genuine Universities, humans will be subject to sophistry on a large scale. Unless the true philosopher continues to combat, through refutation and even mockery, the sophist, words will be abused.

Notes

[1] Romano Guardini, *The Last Things*, translated by Charlotte E. Forsyth and Grace B. Branham (Richmond, Virginia: CLUNY Media, 2019), p. 129.

[2] Ibid., p. 129.

[3] Rosamond Kent Sprague, *The Older Sophists* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), p. 31.

[4] Ibid., p. 50.

[5] Plato, *Hippias Major* and *Euthydemus* in *Socrates and the Sophists*, translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2011).

[6] Plato, *Republic*, translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2007).

[7] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2002), 1128b.

[8] Plato, *Gorgias* in *Plato’s ‘Gorgias’ and Aristotle’s ‘Rhetoric’*, translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2009).

[9] Plato, *Protagoras* in *Socrates and the Sophists*.

[10] Plato, *Sophist*, translated by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 1996).

[11] The latter occurs in the *Theaetetus*. See Plato, *Theaetetus*, translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2004).

[12] Plato, *Apology* in *Plato and Xenophon: Apologies*, translated by Mark Kremer (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2006).

[13] See Plato, *Crito* in *Five Dialogues, second edition*, translated by G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

[14] Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, translated by Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 14.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[16] See Josef Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

[17] Pieper, *Abuse of Language*, p. 16.

[18] Sprague, pp. 42-46.

[19] Pieper, *Abuse of Language*, pp. 18-19.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[24] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda, with an Introduction by Mark Crispin Miller* (Brooklyn: IG Publishing, 2005).

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[26] Pieper, *Abuse of Language*, pp. 34-35.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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